

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

INFORMATION REPORT

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Strength of the Mongolian People's Republic (MPR) Army

1. In September and October 1952 articles appearing in the Hong Kong and Japanese press¹ reported that the MPR had agreed to send five divisions to the Korean front. Estimates of the total strength of the MPR army varied from 120,000 to 200,000 men. These figures are exoessively high in proportion to the total population of one million.² In 1940, when a large number of Japanese troops were stationed along the border between the MPR and Manchukuo, the total strength of the MPR army was no more than 40,000 troops, including border guards. Even after the army was reorganized in 1944 and the number of troops increased, the total strength in 1947 was approximately 60,000, including border guards. If this is considered a normal peace-time strength, the strength of 120,000 to 200,000 men now reported is exaggerated.

Possibility of MPR Troops Being Sent to the Korean Front

2. Newspaper reports from Hong Kong estimated that the number of troops from the MPR to be sent to Korea was 50,000, while other reports stated five divisions. In 1947 the army comprised 12 divisions, of which only five or seven were fully organized. If five divisions or a total of 50,000 troops out of a total of 60,000 MPR troops were sent to Korea, the army would be sending 85 percent of its fighting power. The situation in Korea does not warrant committing this large number of Mongol troops. It is unlikely, furthermore, that the USSR, who was cautious about using MPR troops when she was facing a crisis during the second world war, would now agree to sending Mongol troops into the Korean war. The MPR offered troops to the USSR during World War II but the offer was rejected because the military strength of the MPR was negligible. Only in late 1944, when the war was going favorably for the USSR, was the offer accepted and two Mongol divisions secretly sent to the European front.

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Effects of Sending Mongol Troops to Korea

3. As fighting units, troops of the MPR fight bravely at first but once defeated they lose courage and refuse to face the enemy again. An example of this reaction was the demoralization the Mongol troops suffered when, during the Nomonhan battle in 1939, they were placed opposite the Japanese army and were subjected to severe fighting. The two Mongol divisions which were sent to the European front in World War II were a poor army. Should the Mongol troops be exposed to the heavy artillery fire of the United Nations forces, their morale would be greatly affected. The loss of a few units on the front would also affect the morale of the whole army.
4. Although it is unlikely that Mongol troops will be sent to the Korean front, it is possible that a small number of troops will be sent for propaganda purposes in order to strengthen the morale of the Communist countries and for the practical training of Mongol troops in modern warfare. Should troops be sent for these purposes, the number would probably be less than 10,000 or two divisions, and they would probably serve in reconnaissance or guerrilla capacities.
5. The war in Korea would be unaffected by the arrival of troops from the MPR. The North Korean topography is unsuitable for the type of operation in which Mongol troops are skilled. The Mongol army is formed of cavalry divisions accustomed to flatland operations. Although they are good as cavalymen, they are almost useless as infantry troops. These troops are also unaccustomed to static warfare. They are skilled in conducting guerrilla warfare and surprise attacks and because of their special mobility might be used for these purposes should there be a general engagement with main forces. The strength of a few cavalry divisions, however, cannot have any decisive effects on the present war. Mongol troops do not operate well in foreign areas. Although they have an extremely high fighting spirit when defending their homeland, their fighting spirit falls as they move away from their home country because they are unable to adapt themselves to new environments.

Comments.

1. [redacted] articles which appeared almost daily from September to October 1952 in the Toa (Oriental) News, Hong Kong; the Free People, Hong Kong; and the Tokyo Shimbun, Tokyo.
2. According to the 1951 Britannica Book of the Year, no census has ever been taken in the MPR, estimates of the population vary from 850,000 in 1941 to 2,078,000 in 1945, and a United Nations estimate in 1949 gave the population as approximately 2,000,000.

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